CAPE TOWN

IN 1823

HUGH TORRANCE

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BY

HUGH TORRANCE

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TORRANCE

Hugh Torrance was born in 1799. His father, James Torrance, lived at Hazelbank, near Stonebyres Falls of Clyde—a small orchard property. His mother was a sister of James Wilkie, Knowehead, Uddingston, and was born probably about 1770. Her father entertained the young Pretender's Highlanders on their retreat to Glasgow in December, 1745, and her younger sister, Isabel, who died in 1866 at the age of 89, told of their taking the shoes off his feet after they had finished the 'boynes' of porridge.

Hugh was educated at the Glasgow Grammar School. He was a good deal with his uncle, John Torrance, a farmer south of Limerick—latterly at Adare, on the property of the Earl of Dunraven, who had much trouble with the Croppies. His house was attacked at night about 1827, and he and his wife gallantly defended it. He shot one man dead, and two others were hanged at Limerick. A few years later, when walking in the fields on a Sunday afternoon near his house, his wife was murdered and himself left for dead.

Hugh afterwards went into the warehouse of his uncles, James and John Wilkie, muslin manufacturers (the firm was Hunter & Wilkie), and there acquired some business experience.

His mother had died young, and his own health proved

delicate. He had to try a change of climate, and in 1823, sailed from Leith for the Cape of Good Hope and Van Diemen's Land. He thence went to Sydney, and in June, 1824, sailed from Port Jackson as supercargo in a trading voyage to Tahiti and other islands. He spent about a month in Tahiti, saw a good deal of Queen Pomare, Mr. Pritchard, and other missionaries, and made some excursions into the interior. They sailed from Tahiti for the Marquesas, but in a few days the brig "Jupiter" got on a coral reef at an island he calls Katihu, in lat. 16.55 S., long. 143.54 E., and was totally lost. The launch was sent to Tahiti for assistance, and they were taken off by the brig "Dragon" and brought to Tahiti. After a short residence he sailed again in the brig "Minerva," but in about a week she was dismasted in a hurricane in lat. 17.41 S., long. 144.20 E., and had to put back to Tahiti under jury masts. The "Minerva" was condemned and sold. In March, 1825, he sailed in the brig "Brutus" for Port Jackson. They touched at Eooa on Middleburg Island, when he and three others were seized by the natives and threatened with death, but all escaped, and he arrived at Sydney after ten months' absence.

He afterwards went to Lima, and got into the house of Gibbs (Gibbs, Bright & Co.), in which he eventually got a partnership. He was long at Quito and Lima, and was unremitting at his work; but the desk told on his health, and he did not give in till too late.

He returned to Liverpool in the early summer of 1832, and spent the summer at Rothesay. He was extremely thin and weak, but always lively and cheerful. He died towards the end of that year in the cottage of

his aunt, Mrs. Cross—my grandmother—and is buried in Bothwell Churchyard.

He sent full letters and journals of his voyages, 1823-25, to my father and to his cousin Alexander Cross, my uncle.

(Sgd.) W. KER,
13 February, 1889.

Copy of a Letter written by HUGH TORRANCE, ESQ., *to* ALEX. CROSS—1823.

INDIAN OCEAN.

MY DEAR SANDY,

I wrote to you on the evening of our leaving Table Bay, but I cannot say by what conveyance: there were no ships ready to sail, and I was forced to leave the letter behind. From the bustling that a person's mind is in, when in a strange country, when it is almost impossible to compose one's self, even for a few minutes, you had but very brief letters from me at Cape Town. I believe I promised to give you a few more remarks about that place during the leisure of my passage to N.S.W., which I will now endeavour to fulfil; but as I have no copy of what I wrote you, I fear I will be frequently guilty of repetition. But no matter—a good story is none the worse of being twice told. So I will just give you a few ideas as they occur to me, without either method or arrangement.

On making the land, the first thing that strikes you most is the great height of the hills along the coast, with mountains in the background overtopping each other till they are lost in the clouds. The nearer you approach,

they present so many different appearances that you would not know any particular point, however prominent, an hour afterwards. At the entrance of the Bay is Robin Island, a low piece of land not unlike Horse Island at Ardrossan, tho' larger. It is there that slaves and other malefactors are sent for punishment. It lies about three miles from the main, and there is a passage for ships going into the Bay on either side. On running in we had the Lion Mountain on our starboard hand, along the bottom of which are a number of neat villas and small garden patches. The eye is much regaled here after a long voyage, though the want of large trees gives it a naked appearance. From many positions at sea the Lion Mountain has certainly a strong resemblance to a lion recusant: it has also its tawny colour. You must clear a point, called Green Point from a number of green fields around, before you can have a view of the town. We were greatly baffled here. We had previously been almost becalmed in the lee of the hills, but on rounding the point we were all at once taken aback, and the ship laid on her beam ends that we thought the masts must go overboard, by a strong south-easter setting in from the back of the Devil's Berg. (From carrying all sail we were obliged to reef top sails.) Having so many young men passengers who had almost all learned to go aloft, we were well manned, and we soon wore and stood off. We were about three miles from the town, and it took us five hours to beat up to the anchorage. The ship being so light would not stay, and we had to wear her every tack. The "Capers" never saw a ship better worked into the Bay, notwithstanding it blew such a lifter you could not put your nose over the quarter deck

bulwarks. The ship "Jupiter" from London had been caught the previous evening in the same way, and she did not come to an anchor till the morning after us, when it was quite calm. The Health Officer came off on board about an hour after we anchored, but no other boats were allowed to come alongside till next morning, when he sent an order to hoist the flag. This was hardly done when we had a number of boats from the shore with plenty of rice, sugar, fruit, tobacco, etc., for sale. The merchants were Malays, Hottentots, etc., and we were all besieged with lodging-house keepers, washing people, etc. We were sufficiently amused with these people till breakfast time, after which, it being a fine morning, almost all of the cabin passengers went ashore. I went with several more and took lodgings at Philip Lucas' English Boarding House, Loang Street, which was strongly recommended to us, I found afterwards not without cause, as they are civil and obliging people. Any person might find himself at home here. We paid five Rix dollars per day, equal to 7s. 6d. British, for board and lodging. Considering the fare we got and that in a foreign country, I think it was moderate. After getting all settled, we were told it was tiffin time, or noon, and that the table was covered in the hall. We immediately sat down, the contents of the table, consisting of beef-steaks, fresh water and butter, bread, fruit, wine, etc., disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. Our host was stunned. Everything was renewed, and shared the same fate. "Mon Dieu!" says our host. "Bring out the rounds of beef," says he to our hostess, at the same time remarking that the sea certainly gave people an appetite. Our stomachs now sung out a parley ; I assure

you not before it was time. As dinner was at five we thought a walk would do us no harm as an appetiser.

The appearance of the town from the bay is good, but you have not the slightest idea of its extent from thence. The houses are all painted white, and have the appearance of only small cottages. This is owing to their having all flat roofs, and the proximity of Table and other mountains rising perpendicular over the town. It is built in a sort of amphitheatre, the bay on the north side, and the Devil's Berg, Table and Lion Mountains forming a half circle east and west. I never was at greater loss than in attempting to give you a description of Cape Town and its vicinity. The town is nothing, but whenever those blasted mountains occur to my mind, especially Table, *I am lost in wonder.* It surely is the grandest view in Nature. I only hope you will one day visit it yourself, as I find it quite impossible to give you any idea of the appearance of this part of the world. On landing at the jetty, a sort of wooden pier that runs into the sea, the first thing we saw was a parcel of Madagascar slaves loading some boats at the wharf with sugar and rice. They were entirely naked except a napkin round their middle and a skin thrown over their shoulder. This of course would be a curiosity to us who had never previously seen a band of negroes. Indeed, any European cannot but be extremely gratified going along the streets in witnessing the various manners and customs of the numerous black people of every tribe under the sun, all of which are to be seen here. We could not help stopping and looking at them, but we had a good excuse for this vulgarity in the necessity we were in of waiting for the passing of the large and numerous

teams of horses and oxen; twelve and twenty oxen or eight to fourteen horses *they think* is absolutely necessary to draw their waggons. All drove in hand. The oxen go at the rate of three miles an hour, the horses canter continually at the rate of five or six. The breed of oxen are not unlike those in Ireland, large-boned and horned and very meagre. They are reared mostly two or three hundred miles in the interior, where they are purchased for a mere trifle. A team of twelve first-rate oxen may be bought for 250 Rix dollars; they will cost double at Capetown. The horses are all the Cape breed, and brought, I believe, originally from Spain, except a few English hunters, which may have been brought out by the officers. Like the Arabs, they are very slender, and few above 14 hands high; none can trot, but some gallop very well indeed. The horses are all entire, which is the reason, I believe, of their being very spirited. We had the good fortune of being there during the races, at least two days of them; they commenced the beginning of the week we sailed. They have fine race ground along the shore to Green Point. There was an excellent turnout of beauty and fashion from Capetown, and we had good sport in good horses and well-contested races. Everything was well managed, the Governor, Lord Charles, who was loved at Newmarket, etc., taking the principal lead.*

I was greatly pleased with the show of Dutch beauty. There were certainly a number of fine women amongst them. They dress very gay and very neat; the English girls here cannot compare with them.

The carriages are, in general, old-fashioned and

* See note on p. 25.

clumsy, but they have an imposing effect dashing along 6, 8, and 10 horses in hand all spirited as the devil. Besides, the number of slaves before and behind make you think you are in Fairyland. The manner of harnessing both horses and oxen is different from what it is at home. They use no collars. The whole of the draught is taken by the former from a broad belt that passes across the breast, and the latter are attached by the horns to a long rope that passes up between the pairs. It is made of buffalo skin, in fact all the tackling required is the thongs of buffalo skin. I saw several ploughs going; they and their furniture are equally simple; they are the ploughs of ancient days; single stilt, the coulter, sock and sole compose the whole of the iron work. I think if they turned 20 or 30 pigs adrift in a field without nose-rings, they would do as much and every bit as well in rooting up the land as their plough, two slaves and 12 horses, or the proportion in oxen. I believe I mentioned to you before that slaves are very numerous here, but they are in general the property of the Dutch, many of whom earn their bread entirely by letting them out. They are mostly the children born in the Colony of negroes, who have been there previous to the English possession. They are to be had at from 10 to 20 dollars a month; but there is another description called "Prize Slaves." These have been taken by His Majesty's cruisers from ships in the Slave Trade and brought to Capetown. To pay their expenses I suppose the Government made them serve 7 to 15 years. This is a rascally imposition, as, poor devils, they seldom see out the period, and even if they do, they never know when it comes. Bengalee of every caste, Chinese,

Malays, etc., crowd the streets. The latter are the most respectable of the coloured population, many of them are rich, they have a burial ground on the Lion Rump, which is well worth going to see. It shows great care and anxiety by the watchers over the bodies of deceased friends. In all their actions they are sober and industrious, make good servants, but d—nably treacherous, never forgetting an injury. I think I mentioned the Hottentots to you before. They are dirty, innocent creatures, and excessively fond of spirits. The language generally spoken among them is either Native or Dutch, but most of the natives speak a strange mixture of Native, Portugese, Spanish, Dutch, and English.

All the coloured free people are excessively fond of money, which they lay out mostly in gaudy trumpery of dress. The morning we sailed a boat came alongside with fruit, rice, tobacco, etc. Several bargains were made between the owners (Malay) and the passengers by bartering. By chance I had in my pocket one of those red handkerchiefs I got from you. I held it up; they all pounced upon it, they folded it, measured it, it was quite large enough, the colours were beautiful. They held up a basket of oranges; I did not want any; they then showed me everything they had. I fixed on a Penguin skin, two Ostrich eggs, and a bundle of Bengal cheroots. If conscience had allowed me I might have procured much more for my handkerchief, which now honours the black locks of some Malay beauty. I could get at no more of the red, or I believe with the remainder I might have procured everything they had, boat and all. I tempted them with one of Mr. Paterson's, but it would not do.

The treadmill is a great eyesore to the poor fellows. The idea of being sent there when they misbehave is a great check on their enjoyments at the Little Butt on Sundays. It is really amusing to see with what a misericorde look they ascend the steps of the mill.

No master is allowed to punish his slave, he can only send him to the Tronck, where they are whipped or worked according as the complaint may be, under the inspection of the proper authority. This is a very good law, as the Dutch are in general very cruel to their slaves. We were greatly delighted in the evenings while seated in the "stoop" (a sort of balcony in the front of the house) smoking our cheroots, in listening to the negroes whistling along the streets. Three or four generally go together, each taking a first, second, or third part. It is surprising what harmony they produce, and how quickly they pick up the tunes from the military bands. Indeed they are altogether musical. Almost every Dutch family who have a few slaves have a band. They are easily taught, and the only expense is the instruments.

The Hottentots in the interior, I am told, are first-rate shots; nothing can escape if once they take an aim. There are instances of one or two of them keeping a whole tribe of Boshishmen (sic) or Bushmen at a distance. They pop into a bush where the arrows of the latter cannot penetrate, and taking aim with their muskets tumble over one or two every shot, till the whole retreat.

The Bushmen are a tribe who live in the interior, wandering about without house or home, hate and are hated by all the world. They do great havoc among

the cattle of the settlers in the interior. They are active, supple devils, seldom above 4 or 5 feet high. Robin Island is full of them, where they undergo punishment when taken alive, but which is seldom the case, as no quarter is generally given, their arrows being poisoned.

Beef and mutton is pretty cheap and good, considering that it is driven at least a distance of 200 or 300 miles. The sheep are covered with a coarse, hairy sort of wool, but what is most extraordinary, their tails are so large as to weigh generally from 10 to 12 lbs. of pure tallow. Fowls are good, but very dear. Game are plenty in season, both partridges, hare, snipe, duck, etc. We had venison every day to dinner while there. It is the kind called steinbock, small, but eats sweet like a young kid. There is a great variety of fish. They are cheap and excellent, but, as they are all Dutch, I have forgotten their names. The only shell-fish that are good are the crawfish, a species of lobster of immense size. One alone would give a dozen a good supper. There are a number of rare shells to be picked up along the beach, and frequently by chance you may find a turtle. They are well supplied with this most *delicate of delicacies* by vessels from Ascension and St. Helena Islands. Vegetables are very inferior to those we have at home, and are very dear. It is owing to the heat of the climate which prevents these coming to maturity. Wild beasts are now getting scarce about Capetown, they are all retired into the interior. Still, the wolves and jackals are great disturbers of the peace, and afford ample sport to a very good pack of hounds belonging to the Governor. Banians, a species of baboon (it is said, but I did not see any), are to be seen in hundreds in Table and

adjacent mountains. Several species of snakes are plenty, but I did not venture much in search of them. I only judge from the quantity I saw lying dead on the path around the Kloof, which had been killed by the negroes employed cutting fuel. Fuel is enormously dear at the Cape, which I think may make a good opening for a speculation in coals from N.S. Wales. The Kloof is a beautiful and romantic walk round the Lion Mountain. I went from Green Point, from which you go alongside the Lion with a gentle ascent towards his head. In turning the head the road is fearful, being nearly 1,000 feet above the sea, which roars below you. Then you enter a sort of ravine between the Head and Table Mountain. The descent from there to the town is very steep. It is an 8 mile walk, but is the pleasantest around Capetown. This is a digression from wild beasts, so I put it in parenthesis. There are few elephants, lions, or tigers within 200 miles of Capetown. The two latter are seldom to be found even in the Colony, but several herds of the former have been lately seen, and I understand *felt* by some of the waggoners. About the borders of Caffraria animals of every description are plenty, if one may judge from the number of skins brought to town by the settlers. Lion, tiger, panther, and zebra skins are to be had in abundance. Elephants' teeth found here are neither so good nor so large as those found to the northward of the Colony, and of course bring a like price at home.

While we were at Capetown we had good sport before breakfast on Lion's Rump catching locusts, grasshoppers, lizards, etc., and several times we fell in with small tortoises, which are plentiful enough here. What inter-

ested us most was the great number of the most beautiful and rare flowers to be found even to the summit of the mountains. One kind in particular we gathered in great abundance, the everlasting flower, of which there were three kinds, red, white, and yellow. If pulled in full bloom they never lose colour. I have seen them stuck as ornaments on the roof of a tea-house, 10 years pulled, and as fresh as the first day. The greatest want about Capetown is a botanic garden, indeed of a general museum of some sort. What a beautiful collection of natural curiosities might be made here. I myself, had I been coming home, although I know nothing at all about such things, might have got a very pretty little collection; but as the case stands I had neither room nor a single dollar to spare on such things.

The exports at the Cape are trifling, wine being the principal article, and is almost the only return that can be made. Aloes, buffalo and ox hides and elephants' teeth may also be procured in considerable quantities. From an amendment lately made in the Fisheries Act, sperm and train oil will soon be a considerable export to England; the mitigation of duty being a great encouragement to the whole fishery about the Cape, and from the number of fish I saw in the bay and in the seas adjacent I would expect a considerable produce. The method of doing business at the Cape at present as far as regards the imports is, in my opinion, bad. The agents, or as they call themselves, merchants, sell their consignments by vendue. They appear quite careless at what the goods go off at; they make no selections as to the season of the year; all they appear to care about is the getting the account sales closed (I do believe they

club together). The retailers purchase and think nothing of charging 100 per cent. profit on those goods. I am firm in the belief that an honest and industrious import merchant, who at same time will be a winkel keeper, as they term it, or, in other words, a retailer, could do a profitable business here, who would be careful of his selecting goods and who would be independent of the envious and malignant boors around him.

Gaudy and cheap manufactures, muslins, gloves, handkerchiefs, indeed all sorts of mercery, perfumery, etc., pay well. Ready-made clothes, black and blue, hard and crockery ware, and a number of other manufactures too numerous to mention, would do right well. Had I a capital of £1,000 to £2,000 it is here I would settle. I am convinced a careful man would make a fortune here in a few years. I am sorry I did not make some arrangement before leaving home to stop here. Moreover, the climate is delightful. India goods are to be had for a mere trifle at the vendues, but go to a retailer and you pay almost as high as in England. Silk handkerchiefs 15 to 20 Rix dollars per . Crapes and other Indian silks in proportion. Ostrich feathers may be had for an old song in the interior. In town they charge 2 to 4 Rix dollars each ; 4 make a plume. Tobacco 4 shillings (equal to 1s. British) to 1 Rix dollar per lb. Segars and cheroots at 3 Rix dollars per 100 in the shops, but you may purchase the best Bengal at the vendues for 5 Rix dollars per 1,000 by taking a small box. We got a fine present from Capt. M'Kellar of the "Clydesdale" of 2 boxes, which will keep us going all the passage. All sorts of wine are cheap. Cape is the general family wine, and may be had at 5d. to 9d. per

bottle. I like it as well as any other, though it requires a few days to bring the palate from port to relish it. Claret and madeira are drunk at all dinner parties, but I do not think the qualities are so good as we have at home. Brandy is good at 5s. 6d. per gallon. Tea and sugar cheap. The butter is the produce of the Isle of France, indeed all foreign produce is dirt-cheap when compared with the prices we pay at home, but the extravagant manner in which the people live makes it all up.

I had the good fortune to fall in with a Mr. Scully, the Roman Catholic clergyman of Capetown. He came from New Dublin, is very clever, and has made himself extremely popular from his liberality of sentiment and gentlemanly conduct whilst at the Cape. For the little information I could give him of the state of Ireland, I was doubly rewarded by the knowledge I acquired through him of Capetown. I dined with him several times, and he spent two or three evenings at our lodgings, during which I found him the most agreeable fellow. I met some of the most respectable people at his table, from whom I acquired a knowledge of the prevailing opinions at the Cape. He keeps open house for a number of the officers of the 55th, indeed his table is always surrounded by the literate of the place. Besides his clerical duties, he has the situation of aseroa or astronomer, the emoluments arising from which enable him to live in style. On leaving he was so kind as to give me a letter of introduction to Father Conolly, the clergyman at Hobarttown, which I do not doubt will be of service to me. You will say this is Irish all over.

THE MORAVIANS

The only missionaries who are doing good in Africa are the Moravians; even they do no good in a religious way. They have taught a few to read; but the greatest benefit that accrues from their labours in the vineyard is their teaching the different trades, such as the use of the hammer, saw, chisel, etc., etc. The Moravians have a fine establishment in the interior, and what makes them useful is, they are all taught some mechanical art or other previous to their being laid apart for the mission.

We have made an acquisition to our party in a gentleman and his lady, whom we procured as passengers at the Cape—Mr. Radford, late of the 45th Regiment. He is a most amusing fellow, has been a long time in India, and has been far up in the interior of Africa, where he procured his wife, a nice young woman of 18, the daughter of a settler at Algoa Bay. They lodged at Lucas' when we arrived, and were about to sail for India, but he changed his mind to come with us. If they like the country they intend settling in N.S. Wales.

The Dutch and English at Cape Town are far from being on the best of terms, indeed I do not wonder at it. The winkel keepers are extremely uncivil. If you go to purchase anything from them they dispose of the article in such a way as if they were obliging you and not you them. If they are at dinner you must wait in the shop till they are done or go away if you like it. As to getting any politeness from them in the way of changing their cussed paper money, it is out of the question. We frequently d—d their eyes for their incivility, but we got nothing but "dinna forstaand," or some such words. Our only chance was the finding of a pretty in the winkel, when a laughing eye and a merry look

would procure anything we wanted. We had been but few days when we caught the infection prevalent in Cape Town among the English—enmity to the Dutch, caused principally by their incivility, and we were extremely glad to hear that their influence in Cape Town will, as soon as Bigg's report is laid before Parliament, be at an end. There are no doubt these exceptions in the Colony. Many of the Dutch are kind and polite to strangers. I instance the Wallini and Clocte families at Constantia, but in general here the Dutch have a deadly hatred to the English, any instances to the contrary are, in my opinion, on the surface only, doing it from selfish and interested motives. The Dutch girls are, many of them, pretty and very gay; fond of dancing and music, and they put me in mind of the Highland ladies, everlastingly talking their own sort of Gaelic. From the heat of the climate I am told by an old clergyman that they can, in the words of Professor Richardson, "Smile and smile and be very smiling." In speaking of the heat of the climate, the thermometer the day I ascended Table Mountain was as high as 82 degs. in the shade. What it may be in summer when it is this height in the first month of spring!

Every stranger going to the Cape is recommended to go up Table Mountain, but I met very few of the inhabitants who had themselves been on the summit; it is only from hearsay they describe its effect. From the first time I saw it, I was extremely anxious to visit the top, and after many evenings' determination to visit it next morning, and a cooly engaged to attend us, we were always disappointed by the devil's breakfasting in the mountain, or, in other words, by its being covered

by a cloud. At last an opportunity occurred. I got up at 5 in the expectation of being accompanied by one or more of our passengers, but they were all too lazy. I determined to go alone, when two ladies, a Mrs. Shuttleworth and Miss Lucas, said they would go with me. This was more than I could wish for, as they are both good-looking and, moreover, not above 20. After taking a cup of mocha, we set off at seven with the cooly, who acted as guide, at the same time carrying a basket containing a shoulder of lamb, two bottles of wine, a bottle of rum, oranges, limes, bread, butter, etc. At first the ascent is gradual, the path winding along a narrow stream amongst large stones and brushwood is very tedious ; there not being a breath of wind in the heavens, the heat of the sun was dreadful, so that we had to frequently sit down under the shade of the large rocks which roll down from the precipices. These delays made the road tedious, but we were delighted by the appearance of the beautiful flowers and variety of heaths which covered the earth around, and whilst resting we procured a number of curious insects. The ascent is nothing for the first two-thirds of the journey, but when we got this length, where there is a grand waterfall of 20 feet, we were right tired, and sat down to have a rest in earnest and to taste the contents of the basket. I was fairly done up, and my legs would scarcely support their burden, so you may guess in what state my companions were. Our poor cooly nearly fainted, but after giving him nearly "a drinkee for drink, Massa," he recovered. On looking up at the part we had yet to ascend, we gave up all idea of going further, but a half hour's rest, a strong glass of lime punch for myself, and a few glasses

of wine for the ladies put us in spirits to try it again for a few hundred yards further. From this place we had a most delightful view of the town and bay, the prospect on our left was hid by Lion Mountain, and on the right by Devil's Berg, so we could only see in a straightforward direction, but embracing the whole town and bay with the country on the other side to a great distance. You cannot have any idea how interesting a situation this was. The water gushing from our feet over a rock 20 feet high, around us a forest of low brushwood, but what would be called a garden of the rarest shrubs and most beautiful flowers. Right over our heads the rocks rising upwards of 1,800 feet, below us the town, bay, and shipping, etc., etc. I never shall forget it. You have not the least idea of the ecstasy of my feelings on this occasion, so I will say no more about it, but just put yourself in mind that I was 2,000 feet nearer Heaven than the world below me, seated at the feet of two pretty and agreeable young women, and though only 10 o'clock, I had a good stomacher of lime punch aboard. I must stop or you will say I am getting on to the descriptive—what I know nothing at all about. Still I am endeavouring to give you, not a description, but an account (it is more mercantile like) of my sufferings on Table Mountain. The music from the town now startled us by saying they were changing guard, and that it was high time for us to set out. I had some trouble in waking our cooly, who had been singing bass to "The woodpecker tapping," "Paddy O'Rorke," and "Is there a heart that never loved," ever since he had got his second glass—or in his own words, "Drinkee for dry, Massa." We now started in great spirits, deter-

mined to go to the top. We had been sitting in the shade of a silver-tree, and when we uncovered we found the sun really roasting, so that before we had gone many yards we were obliged to sit down; it was now both dangerous and fatiguing. We clambered up a sort of rut made by the water, and we frequently had to pull each other up a rock six feet, when the touching of a loose stone sent those behind to the other world. We had entered the division of the mountain, where you lose sight of everything below by the projection of the rocks. Now the sun had no mercy on us; I frequently smelt my coat to know if it were really burning it, and the part of a drag horse which I had to act in pulling up the ladies one after the other was the devil entirely. After five hours' fagging at it we got to the head of the pass, when a large plain like a churchyard covered with gravestones presented itself to our view. The rocks were quite flat on the top, and rendered smooth by time and the weather. We now inquired what was all in the basket, and we sat down to an elegant repast, composed of all the delicacies of the season, which Dame Lucas had been kind enough to furnish us and for which we drank her health in the first bumper. After tiffin the cooly and I rigged my cloak as a sort of awning with a few branches of the silver-tree and the ladies composed themselves to slumber, while he and I went to explore the S.E. side of the mountain. I wished much to see Table and Simon's Bays, so I went in that direction When I got to the verge, about half a mile distant, I was delighted by looking down on the bays, though I was 25 miles distant by the road. I could plainly perceive the situation of the coast where we had been so

baffled on first making the land. I found that in first running in we were not more than 10 miles from Simon's Bay, but mistaking Cape Haughlip for that of Good Hope, we fell to leeward of it and were three days getting to the N.W. of it. This mistake was the reason of our running into Table Bay. From where I stood a range of very rugged and irregular hills runs S.E., and at the extreme point is the Cape of Good Hope. I felt many curious sensations standing in this spot, standing on such an eminence at the extreme southern point of Africa, far removed from every friend, with only a poor cooly boy as a companion, who had already fallen asleep, I felt in a forlorn state. I sat there nearly an hour, during which many occurrences of the past rose to me, and the future I endeavoured to smother; but I rose with the determination of braving the worst that may happen. Hope flattering me that I shall one day return home and be again a member of a winter evening circle of dear friends, when I will tell over and over these scenes, scenes the finest in the world, to a fond audience; but I fear that e'er that time many, many of those I have left will have been taken away and that age will prevent even myself from enjoying those scenes hope now holds up to me. I now thought it high time to return to my companions, who I thought might be alarmed at my stay, run-away slaves being numerous on the mountain, who frequently attack the uncautious whites for plunder. Everything was well on my return, they were busy picking everlasting flowers, insects, pebbles, etc., with which the hill is covered. We also went up on the N.W. portion of the Table, where we found a fine bain of water cold as ice. However thirsty,

we drank with great caution. This division is 30 to 40 feet higher than the other, equally flat and smooth on the surface, but not nearly so large. At the brink next the town we had the most delightful view of all; it was quite a birds-eye look at all around Cape Town. You might see every lane and street in it; the ships in the bay appeared like a parcel of small boats. This place of itself amply repaid us for all the trouble and fatigue we had had in ascending, one leap and 2,000 feet would hardly have brought us up, the mountain is so perpendicular at this part. After being completely satisfied looking all around us, we began to think of returning, particularly as we could see a small white cloud gathering at a short distance from us, which put us in fear of the cloth being spread, when it is very dangerous, indeed impossible to go down; many accidents having happened and many curious stories of parties being delayed two and three days on the top, quite starved, are current; if such a thing had happened to me, poor fellow! what could I have done with two ladies; I must have gone distracted. On our return to the cooly, we spread out the remaining contents of the basket and had a delicious snack, after which we finished a bottle of wine to our friends far and near. We now felt ourselves in case for returning. On getting into the pass, I fired a pistol for the purpose of starting any monkey there might be among the rocks, when we were greatly startled by two large vultures darting from the cliffs with a tremendous noise. A shower of stones came hurling from the place of their exit, which made us all stand by; at the same time we were gratified by a flight of sugar-birds. They are not unlike our goldfinch, but are more variegated

and much smaller. We were disappointed in not seeing any monkeys. I had charged another pistol with buck shot in the hope of bringing one down, if they are wounded in the least you may catch them. We found that going down, though not so fatiguing, the sun being further down, was more difficult than coming up, and more dangerous, being more apt to roll the stones on each other. We got to the waterfall by sunset with a few scratches and bruises and without a shoe to our feet. The ladies' shoes and stockings were both gone, and they had to trudge it literally on their bare soles. We were now much fatigued, and a royal glass of the whole contents of our bottle hardly put us in condition to weather the town. Before we got through the brush-wood darkness became visible, so far as the full moon would allow. The cooly was beginning to be fearful of getting the Tronck for being out after hours, no black person being allowed in the streets an hour after gunfire without a pass and a lantern. I had now an enviable situation, trudging through a thick brushwood with two ladies hanging on my arms, every now and then stumbling over a stump or a stone. A branch of the prickly pear frequently hitting you a thump in the face, making you scratch and sing bloody murder for an hour after. By Gingo! it was quite romantic, and a fit place for a sentimental writer or a painter. We sang "Te Deum" when we got to the mill, and fell in with a fine footpath, where we talked over the pleasures of the day and the hair-breadth escapes we had made, all of which were to be held forth in glowing colours to the droves at home; indeed we were to carry it very highly. We got home exactly at 8 o'clock. They were greatly alarmed at our

stay, and were about to send a parcel of slaves in search of us, when we popped in and fell to without quarter upon a quarter of steinbock which they had kept warm for us.

Thus ended our trip to Table Mountain, which I would not have lost for the world, and, strange to say, not one in the ship but myself has been upon it, though on leaving Leith I was the most unlikely person in the ship for such an undertaking.

Note.

"The Governors at first were all powerful, and their personal character affected the lives and fortunes of their subjects. Lord Charles Somerset, for instance, who ruled from April 1814 to January 1820, and again from November 1821 to March 1826, able and public spirited as he was, was by nature a despot. He left his mark in many ways on the colony, and the names of Worcester, of Somerset, of Beaufort, still tell the tale of his family. His reign began with an uprising of border farmers in 1815, irritated by government interference with their treatment of the blacks. At a place named Slachter's Nek most of them laid down their arms, but five were afterwards hung for high treason, a stern sentence and which alienated Dutch sympathies. The later years of his government were embittered by quarrels with the colonial press, not yet set free, and in the end he returned to England to answer charges which were brought against him in the House of Commons, and resigned his appointment."

C. P. Lucas, *Historical Geography of the British Colonies*, Vol. IV., *South and East Africa*, part I., pp. 179-180.